CLAIMS

We claim:

1.   A messaging method comprising, in combination:

a machine receiving a first message provided by a first station and destined for second

station;

the machine converting the first message to an SMS message and sending the SMS

5   message to the second station;

the machine receiving a spoken response message from the second station; and

the machine sending the spoken response message to the first station.

2.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first message defines a

return ID associated with the first station, the messaging method further comprising:

the machine storing a correlation between the return ID and the second station;

when the machine receives the spoken response message from the second station, the

machine determining the return ID based on the correlation; and

the machine using the return ID to direct the spoken response message to the first station.

3.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the return ID comprises a

network address of the first station.

4.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 3, wherein the network address of the

first station comprises an IP address.

5.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 1, wherein storing a correlation between

the return ID and the second station comprises storing a data record including an indication of

the return ID and an indication of the second station.

6.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the indication of the second

station comprises a mobile identification number of the second station.

7.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 5, further comprising:

the machine providing in the SMS message a callback number pointing to a port at the

machine;

the machine receiving a call to the callback number from the second station; and

wherein, receiving a spoken response message from the second station comprises

receiving the spoken message via the call to the callback number.

8.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the second station comprises

a mobile station.

9.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the second station comprises

a wireless telephone.

10.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the second station comprises

a computer with a wireless modem.

11. A messaging method as claimed in claim 1, wherein:

the first station comprises a computer terminal on a packet switched network;

the machine is also on the packet switched network; and

receiving the first message comprises receiving a packet sequence carrying the first message.

12. A messaging method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first message comprises a text string

13. A messaging method as claimed in claim 1, wherein converting the message to an SMS message comprises extracting a text string from the message and inserting the text string as payload in an IS-41 SMDPP message.

14. A messaging method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the machine recording the spoken response in a compressed audio file, wherein sending the spoken response message as at least part of a response message to the first station comprises sending the compressed audio file as at least part of the response message.

15. A messaging method as claimed in claim 14, wherein sending the spoken response message comprises sending a packet sequence representing payload, the payload comprising the compressed audio file.

16. A messaging method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the compressed audio file comprises a WAV file.

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17.   A messaging method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the second station is a mobile

station, the method further comprising, in combination:

the machine receiving an indication of a location of the mobile station; and

the machine sending to the first station, together with the spoken response message, an

5   indication of the location of the mobile station,

whereby, the first station may present, together with the spoken response message, an

indication of the location of the mobile station.

18.   A method of facilitating communication between a first terminal and a second

terminal, the method comprising, in combination:

receiving at a machine a first message provided by the first terminal, the message

comprising (i) a return address associated with the first terminal, (ii) a destination address

associated with the second terminal, and (iii) payload;

the machine recording a correlation between the return address and the second terminal;

the machine sending at least a portion of the payload to the second terminal;

the machine thereafter receiving from the second terminal a response message, and, based

on the correlation, the machine identifying the return address; and

10   the machine sending to the return address, for receipt by the first terminal, a second

message embodying the response message.

19.   A wireless messaging method comprising:

registering a mobile station as being available to receive a message;

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receiving at a machine a first message provided by a first terminal and destined for the mobile station, the first message comprising payload;

5   storing a data record that correlates the mobile station with the first terminal;

sending the payload to the mobile station, whereby the payload may be presented to a user at the mobile station;

establishing a call connection between the mobile station and the machine;

via the call connection, receiving a spoken message from a user at the mobile station; and

10   sending to the first terminal a message embodying the spoken message.

20.   A wireless messaging method as claimed in claim 19, wherein registering a mobile station as being available to receive a message comprises registering a user at the mobile station as being available to receive a message.

21.   A method of facilitating communication between a first machine and a second machine, at least the second machine comprising a mobile station, the method comprising, in combination:

sending a registration message to a messaging server so as to register the second machine

5   as being available to receive messages, the registration message providing (a) an ID associated with the second machine and (b) a network address associated with a third machine, whereby messages destined for the second machine will be sent to the third machine;

receiving at the third machine a set of data packets representing a message provided by the first machine, the data packets defining at least (i) a return address associated with the first

10   machine and (ii) payload;

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the third machine generating an SMS message carrying at least a portion of the payload

and including in the SMS message a callback number associated with the third machine;

the third machine sending the SMS message to the second machine;

the third machine thereafter receiving a call placed from the second machine to the

15   callback number and, via the call, receiving a spoken response message from a user at the second

machine; and

the third machine sending the spoken response message to the return address, for receipt

by a user at the first station.

22.   A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the ID identifies a user at the second

machine and is thereby associated with the second machine.

23.   A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the ID identifies the second machine.

24.   A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the network address associated with

the third machine comprises an IP address.

25.   A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the return address associated with the

first machine comprises a network address of the first machine.

26.   A method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the return address associated with the

first machine comprises an IP address.

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27.   A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the payload destined for the second machine comprises a text message.

28.   A method as claimed in claim 21, further comprising the third machine storing a data record correlating the return address with a messaging key that is based at least in part on a network address of the second machine,

whereby when the third machine receives the call from the second machine, the third machine may identify the network address of the second machine and, based at least on the network address of the second machine, retrieve the return address.

29.   A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein the network address of the second machine comprises a directory number.

30.   A method as claimed in claim 21, further comprising, in combination:

the third machine storing a data record correlating the return address with a messaging key that is based at least in part on a network address of the second machine; and

when the third machine receives the call from the second machine, the third machine identifying the network address of the second machine and, based at least in part on the network address of the second machine, retrieving the return address.

31.   A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the payload comprises a text message.

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32. A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein generating the SMS message comprises generating an IS-41 SMDPP message carrying at least a portion of the text message.

33. A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the third machine sending the SMS message to the second machine comprises the third machine sending the SMS message to a message center for transmission to the second machine.

34. A method as claimed in claim 21, further comprising recording the spoken response message as a compressed audio file.

35. A method as claimed in claim in 34, wherein the compressed audio file comprises a WAV file.

36. A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein sending the spoken response message to the return address comprises generating a set of data packets representing the spoken response message, and sending the data packets into a network.

37. A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein sending the spoken response message to the return address comprises streaming the spoken response to the return address.

38. An instant messaging gateway comprising, in combination:

means for receiving from a first station an instant message destined for second station;

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means for converting the instant message to an SMS message and sending the SMS message to the second station;

5   means for receiving a spoken response message from the second station; and

means for sending the spoken response message as at least part of a response instant message to the first station.

39.   A wireless instant messaging (IM) system comprising, in combination:

an IM server coupled with a network;

an IM client proxy coupled with the network, the IM client proxy defining an IM client proxy address;

a mobile station;

the IM server maintaining a registration record indicating that the mobile station is available to receive messages but pointing to the IM client proxy address as an address to which messages destined for the mobile station should be sent;

the IM client proxy receiving from the network a message provided by a sender on the network and destined for the mobile station, and the IM client proxy responsively sending the message to the mobile station;

the mobile station receiving the message sent from the IM client proxy and presenting the message to a user;

the mobile station placing a call to the IM proxy;

15   the IM proxy receiving, via the call, a spoken response message; and

the IM client proxy sending the spoken response message to the sender on the network.

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